

[J. M. Brown]

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J.M. Brown, 54, was born on his father's stock farm, which was located 12 Mi. N.E. of Ft. Worth, Texas. Brown was taught to ride a horse at an early age, and was employed by his father to take care of his stock when Brown was eight years old. His ambition as a child was to be a real bronc buster, such as he saw when his father took him to Fort Worth. At every opportunity, he rode unruly horses until he was recognized as an able horse trainer. Bud Daggett, who owned a ranch 15 Mi. N. of Ft. Worth, employed him as a bronc buster in 1899. This became his life's vocation, working intermittently for Daggett, J.R. Jameson, a horse dealer, and the Collier Ranch, located on Rock Creek, near Ft. Worth. When he wasn't employed as a horse trainer, he dealt in cattle until the injuries he received in his vocation forced him to retire from all activity in 1937. Brown now resides at 3010 Clinton Ave. N. Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

"You're looking for old ex-cow hands are you? Well, you're talking to one that used to be considered a right able bronc buster. I've wet nursed a few cow critters in my time too. The trouble about it all is, that I've gone through so much misery lately, that it's hard for me

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to think about anything but my aches and pains. I hurt all over, all the time. I'm just like a punch drunk prize fighter. I got hurt in the business, and I'll never get over it.

"Where I first learned to ride, was on my father's stock farm he used to run about 12 miles N.E. of here. I was born there, on May the 2nd, 1883. I reckon I was riding before I was five years old because my dad used me as a cow puncher when I wasn't but eight. Of course, he didn't run so many head, from 10 to 50, but I rode herd on all he had 'til Bud Daggett hired me in 1899, to work for him.

"I didn't go to work for Bud an a cow puncher, though. He hired me as a bronc buster. That was what I done all my life when I could get that kind of work. I can recall when I was a kid, how I always wanted to be a real bronc buster when I grew up, and I rode everything I could get on. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 When dad went to the field to plow and I had to go to help, I'd ride on one of the mules. When dad went to town for supplies and wouldn't let ne take a hoss for myself, I'd ride one of the team. Many's the licking I caught for riding the yearlings on the place. Dad said I rode the fat off them, and might break their backs. I didn't care, though. What I wanted to do, was to learn to ride 'em rough. And I didn't care how rough.

"I guess every kid has belonged to a gang at some time or other. As far apart as we lived, we still had a gang of kids that would get together for a little fun. We'd spot a yearling that belonged to somebody, then go ride him that night in the moon light. Anything to ride something. We got good, too. We got so good that it was pretty hard to throw us. I believe I was about the best rider in our gang, though, for that was my ambition. When I was about 15 years old, I could ride anything anywhere, and dad give in to letting me ride. He told mother that I could take care of myself pretty well. She never did give in, but I think that's the way women are anyhow.

"Ever since I can recall, Fort Worth has been a cattle shipping point. You see, the railroads came to Fort Worth about the year I was born. Since then, the railroads carried more and

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more beef, 'til when I got to be a good sized kid, the trail drives were a thing of the past. The reason I mentioned this was, to tell about us driving our beef to Fort Worth to sell it. We'd make up a herd of all dad wanted to sell, then drive it in. That was the high light of my kid experiences. Those trail drives. Some people would laugh at them, because they were so short, but to me as a kid, they were something. Why, we even had several stampedes in that short a distance. It really doesn't make any difference in how far you drive them. The first 50 miles are the hardest anyhow. We'd get the herd on the way, then some of them would want to break back to their home pastures. A stampede with just a few critters can cost quite a bit of money if they got hurt while stomping. Dad never lost, though, because the land was pretty level. Fenced too, but a fence doesn't mean a thing to a critter on the stomp. I've seen big stomps where the critters just run over a fence as if it wasn't there.

“When I got to be about 16 years old, I went to a place where when they had a stomp, it meant something. Bud Daggett hired me as a bronc buster, and he run around 6,000 head in the ' D ' iron, 15 miles from town, due North. I didn't have so awful much busting to do because he had some other good riders on the place. There was Walter Campbell, Lay Singers, Walter Lions, Will Green, and others. Cow punchers are like boomers. They drift to a place, work awhile, then drift along. Bud wouldn't hire a man though, unless he could really ride and rope. You take most of those fellows, and they were good shots, too.

“Of course, Fort Worth and Tarrant County was pretty well organized, and cattle rustling was held down pretty well. Better than it is now, because nowadays, the rustler uses a truck to do his stealing with. A truck with the tail gate forming a ramp. He can cut a fence, drive right up to a herd, run a couple to three or four up the ramp, put the ramp up to make his tail gate, then drive off to a butcher's where the beef will be butchered in a couple of hours, the hide and [off?I?] burnt, and no tell tale spots left. Nobody but the butcher and the driver knows a thing about it.

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"What rustling we had was very little. Stampedes, fights, and fence trouble was all we had to bother us. You could pretty well figure on a stomp almost everytime you rounded up a herd of critters. 4 Good reson back of it, too, because you drove a cow away from it's regular feeding place, and made it mix with a bunch of other critters by main force. Every time she tried to go back home, you'd scare it back into the herd. Then, you'd have a thunder storm, or something else to scare it, and there wasn't no holding it then, unless you was able to keep the herd held together. A stomp will always have a leader. If you could keep the leader pretty well rounded up, you'd have the herd in hand. We could pretty well tell when a stomp was likely to start in bad weather, but when a wild animal or some other unusual scare came up, you'd always be took by surprise. The sound would come, and the herd would be off like an express train, running with all it's might. These cow punchers I mentioned their names, were regular hands on the Daggett Ranch, and as I said before, were good riders. You could depend on them to stop a stomp about as soon as any good bunch could stop a herd.

"The system they used was about the same as any other ranch. One of them would try to get out in front and mill the leader while the others kept the herd from straggling out. Keep the herd together until the leaders were turned and running in a circle, then the herd would run 'til it run it'self down. A stomp never stopped 'til some of the critters bawled. Then, a herd'd stop within five minutes at the most after the first bawl.

"The fence trouble was when some neighbor didn't have enough grass or water, mostly water, and they'd cut the fence to let their stuff get into the Daggett place and get the water or the grass. The fights came off mostly, while the boys were in town. Some other ranch cow punchers would be in town, and they'd begin bragging on one of their riders and how he could ride better than any other rider. Or maybe the whole bunch would be saying they could outride any other 5 outfit. If too much fire water hadn't been taken on, usually the outcome would be a small sized rodeo. We'd all go to the pasture just North of the river, and ride the worst hosses we could find in Fort Worth. We could always find several bad

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hosses in town, because nearly everybody kept hosses and the worst hoss in the world, I guess, is a saddle hoss gone bad. They're usually killers, and try to paw a rider to death.

"These rodeos always provided a good show, and hardly ever was anybody hurt. Reason for that was because there was a-plenty good riders around to help, and if it looked like a rider might get caught, somebody'd ride between the hoss and the man and help him.

"There was one cow puncher that worked on the Daggett place off and on, that was the worst at starting these fights of anybody I ever heard of. He was one of these picture show kind of cow punchers. The swaggering, showy type. He'd wear his chaps to town, and swagger around like a rooster on parade. The trouble about his swaggering was, that he was able to about call any of his bluffs. He was as good a rider as I ever saw, and a dead shot. He was so good, and careless with it, that he was always getting into hot water with the law here and having to go to Oklahoma. Then, the next time he showed up, he was running from the law in Oklahoma. He was always either running from the law here or the law there. Oh yes, his name was Gid Nance. All the old timers here knew him.

I worked for Bud Daggett off and on, about 10 years altogether. While I wasn't working for him, I was busting hosses for J.R. Jameson, a hoss dealer. He bought hosses in West Texas, drove 'em here, had me bust 'em, then drove 'em to East Texas, where he could always find a buyer. He'd drive from 150 to 200 head at a time from somewhere in West Texas. It took quite a few riders to ride herd on that many of them at a time, but he'd get 'em through some way or other with as few 6 riders as he had to have. His system was to have a bronc buster partly break 'em as the hosses were caught, then drive 'em here to Fort Worth, have me finish the job, then drive 'em on to his market. You see, the handling between West Texas and here would make the busting easier, and take me less time. He made plenty money doing that.

"I worked about five years straight for him. Going with him to West Texas. We'd trap the hosses in the Palo Duro canyon, the Yellowhouse Canyon, and other places where nature

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fixed part of a hoss trap for you. When you could get the hosses into a canyon, you could either run 'em into a blind canyon, if you found one or, you could block up one end of a canyon, and keep riders at the end you drove the herd into. It just wasn't hardly possible to trap 'em other wise. I've heard a lot about creasing them, but that's easier told than done. Too much danger of killing your hoss because the creasing place was so close to the head.

“The business of trapping wild hosses goes pretty hard on a man because you have to keep after the herd for two and three days, riding in relays. The wild hosses always ran in big, wide circles, trying to keep as close as possible to their home grounds. This way, all you had to do, was to follow the herd, find out where it was used to getting it's water, and grazing. After you got this, you started chasing it. Once it makes a circle, you can depend on it that it will usually stay right in the circle it made at first. After getting the circle fixed, we'd station men along the route with fresh hosses to relieve the riders in after the herd. After the herd had run a couple of days without rest, it wasn't so wary. You had to run 'em down to catch 'em because they were too wary to go into a trap 'til they were real tired out. Even then, it wasn't easy to trap them. 7 “The real work comes after the herd has been trapped. Then the hoss buster catches it. The men working with him, go into the corral or trap, and rope one of them. Then they'll bring it outside, or the busting will be done inside. Whenever it's done inside the corral, a man has to be kept on the watch that the other hosses don't go wild and try to kill the buster when he gets thrown. That's an angle I never heard talked about much, but it's a real one for a wild hoss buster because sometimes a hose in the wild herd will try to fight a buster. Usually they're so wild that they have to be caught to get 'em around a man.

“After the men working with the buster have a saddle on the wild hoss, they keep it tied to the snubbing post 'til the rider gets on. Then they wait 'til everybody is out of danger before they turn the wild hoss loose. When he's turned loose, 95 out of a 100 of them will try to turn themselves wrong side out to get rid of it's rider. They'll pitch so hard that it's nothing at all unusual for a bronc buster to quit a hoss with his nose bleeding. Sometimes,

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they don't get to quit. Sometimes the hoss catches the buster in such a way that he breaks his ribs, or he gets thrown and fails to light right, and breaks a neck, a leg or something. That's the worst part of the business, but it's all in the day's work. After a bronc buster gets thrown once, real good, as a rule, he's good for nothing else but a three by six hole in the ground. Very very few of 'em ever come back after one good throw.

"That's what's the matter with me today. I've been thrown so many times that I'm just cheating the undertaker by living. After I worked for Jameson, I broke hosses every Summer for the Collier Ranch out on Rock Creek. I'd bust 30-40 head every Summer for them.

"That's about all the hoss busting I done on a big scale. I never wet nursed many cows besides for the Daggett place. I did ride 8 herd on a good sized herd which was located right where the Fort Worth Stock Yards are located right now. It was in 1900, and Sansom Herald had 1500 head of ' CD ' cattle he was holding there. He hired me as an extra rider because they were having so much trouble. They were old starved steers, and they'd stampede every night. No matter what we done, them steers stampeded every night. They'd run any direction, just so long as they was running away from that spot. We never did find out if anything but starvation was running them. Finally though, the T.P. got us some cattle cars so's we could load 'em and got 'em off our hands.

"The Collier Ranch brand was the ' 7K ' connected. You make it by making the 7, then making the K right with it, using the back part of the 7 for the fore part of the K. To save me, I can't recollect how many head they run, nor the ram rod's name. I expect it was Collier himself though, because it was about an average ranch of those days.

"Well, I've helped all I could, I could tell lots more but I'm in too much pain these days to recollect much else. Rode too many wild hosses.